

"Saying it like it is!"

Normally, I'd be sitting here at my desk loosening-up my sweatpants drawstring and uttering a large sigh of relief. I'd have probably just finished working on some Thanksgiving leftovers and another slab of pie. Not this year, unfortunately. We had an invitation to go to my wife's mother's house this year, so leftovers are out. So now, I'm sitting here and feeling withdrawal pangs! Good thing I purchased an extra pie for our own use; I think I need to gobble down a slice or two... I hope that everyone had a terrific holiday with family and friends; in another month, we can do it all over again!

This is traditionally probably the slowest news week of the year. Technology news is slowing and gaming news will likely pick up a bit to saturate everyone for the holidays. That's okay, we all need a little slowdown near the end of the year anyway!

Well, I have no real earth-shattering editorial comments this week. It may be due to the holiday fare, I don't know. So instead, I'll just close up here, grab a piece of pie, and put this week's issue to bed!

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. I sit here, bloated and uncomfortable from the feast (yes, I'm writing this on Thanksgiving evening). I did a really dumb thing today. I sat there, even though I had promised myself that this year would be different, and gorged myself on turkey. Have I ever mentioned that I love turkey? Not only did I eat WAY too much turkey, but then I sat back and rested (one of the worst things you can do), and then went and gorged myself again (the OTHER worst thing you can do). I'm paying for it now, but it was all worth it. I don't know what it is about turkey, but it's one of my favorite foods in all the world.

Of course, I did take the time to remind myself of what I have to be thankful for (no, it wasn't just TURKEY). Family, friends, health, and community are all right at the top of my list.

No, "friends" and "community" aren't the same thing... although they do overlap. Friends are those people who are special to me for who and what they are. Community is the group of people who share a common bond of some sort. With us, it's our choice of Atari computers. I doubt that people would have understood this type of community even ten years ago. Being online is such a new experience that a lot of folks just can't grasp the sense of community. Well, as time goes on, I'm sure that we will be put in the same situation by that mother of revelation: Progress.

On the Linux front, I'm getting much more acquainted with it, and I'm really liking it. It's a very different philosophy from that of Windows... or from TOS for that matter. The neat thing about Linux is that it's very security conscious. You can set up accounts for individual users, or even for different tasks. Right now I'm only running Linux on the PC, but if I get comfortable enough with it, I'm going to install the Motorola 68K version on my TT.

Right now, you can either order a CD with the M68K version, or download it from one of several ftp sites, but I've heard rumblings that there may be an Atari-specific distribution in the works soon. Wouldn't it be great to install something like that without having to weed out all the non-Atari stuff? I'll keep you informed of any developments.

Another thing I'm really impressed with is the speed of Linux as opposed to Microsoft's offerings. Remember the SETI@home project? That's the one where you download a program that grabs data generated by the Arecibo Radio Telescope and analyzes it for intelligent signals from outside our solar system. Unfortunately, there isn't a version of the program available for our beloved Atari computers, but there are versions for Windows, Mac, and a bunch of different Unix variants.

I've got to tell you that I was quite impressed with myself when I optimized my Win98 setup so that the time it took to complete a block of SETI data from 21 hours down to an average of just under fifteen hours.

Then I switched to Linux, grabbed the Linux version of the SETI@home program and installed it. My jaw bounced on the floor once or twice after completing my first SETI block under Linux. My time to complete a block had dropped to about 11.75 hours! Now THAT is a speed increase! I'm guessing that there are ways to optimize this new setup, but there's no way that I could do it with the limited amount of knowledge I now possess. I'm not sure that this one example is really indicative of the real speed increase, but it's kind of neat all the same.

Hmmm... if that Atari Linux CD takes off, we might even have to start a special column here in A-ONE. Any volunteers?

Well, let's get on with all the news, hints, tips and info available on the UseNet while I digest a little bit of that huge meal...

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Remember last week when someone mentioned that John Rojewski had completed a javascript client for the ST series of computers? Well, there wasn't a heck of a lot of feedback about it last week. But that's not the case this time around. When someone asks about integrating it into a CAB module, Jo Even Skarstein says:

"Unfortunately it's not that simple, if the JS-engine doesn't have access to the objects in the document and/or frameset it is a part of, it's virtually useless. I can't see how this can be done without rewriting large parts of CAB."

Trevor Spencer asks:

"So what could you use the program for if, like me, you only have an Atari?"

Jo Even answers simply:

"Not much I'm afraid."

Bill Platt asks:

"Couldn't the entire html file be first read by the js interpreter and then passed onto CAB as a completed HTML file. The end result of any javascript is to write some piece of information to the document. While this would slow down cab, it would at least give some type of javascript support."

Jo Even answers:

"But that would only work for inlined JavaScript and the OnLoad-method."

But Bill won't give up, and posts:

"It would be a start! External .js files could automatically be passed to the js interpreter as well as the html file and the final output sent to cab as a completed html file. This would slow cab down tremendously, but using the dsp might help."

"Phantommm" asks:

"I was wondering if anyone is currently working on any new Atari related CDs with the intent to market them for sale?"

Dennis McGuire tells Phantommm:

"Funny you should mention that! Bob Buman of the Spectrum Atari Group of Erie has put together a "totally Atari" CD-ROM to commemorate the 15th anniversary of our user group. It features some of the history of our club, but also includes much, much more. Both our 8-bit and ST PD libraries are on it along with Atari commercials, interviews, software, etc. It's sort of a walk down memory lane!

The SAGE Commemorative CD-ROM is scheduled for release on December 4th which our anniversary date. It will cost about \$10 plus shipping. Watch for a formal announcement with more details and exact price (once we find the cheapest shipping method!) in about a week."

Greetz Marcer adds:

"Yeah, I'm almost finished with about 1 Game Cd, 1 Demo Cd, 1 Utility Cd and elite cd 1. all cds are filed. but i'm still working with the descriptions. "

Believe me folks, I hadn't seen this message thread before I wrote that thing about the Atari Linux CD.

Anyway, on to other subjects. Ken Hartlen asks about surfing the 'net with his Atari and how to get a PPP connection:

"I've tried STinG and system was hanging while loading the Auto Folder. Would any CFG settings cause this?

I tried STiK2B and same results as when I tried STiK1 for SLIP connections,

I connect but after that the clients seem lost and my ISP (interlog.com) eventually disconnects me.

All I'm trying to do is Telnet to see if things are working and I just see the occasional flicker of the SD and RD modem LEDs. Can someone please email a client app. to 'test' the connection?

Here is my system set up:

Mega ST2 w/2MB RAM
ROM v1.4
GEMDOS v0.15
GEM v1.40
NeoDesk v3.03
STiK2B

Has everyone had to tinker to get STiK and STinG to work? Or has someone simply changed the username, password, DNS, etc. and have it work first time?

Any TAF member reading this have Interlog as an ISP and connect successfully with STiK or STinG?

I'm at a loss as to why something seemingly simple, refuses to work."

*Editor's note: It's always the simple things, isn't it?

Mike Freeman tells Ken:

"I was probably just incredibly lucky, but I didn't have to change anything to get STinG to work. I did end up tinkering to optimize MTU and such, but it did work for me right off. However... Things didn't work at all on the ISP I had before the one I have now. No matter what I did, nothing worked properly. This was using STiK. Another thing to consider, which I found out was true on my Falcon at least: The more software you load up the system with (AUTO/ACC/CPX) the less reliable your connection gets. I'm sure on an ST it's even worse. For me, it got to the point that CAB couldn't completely download ANYTHING without the connection freezing up or going incredibly slow (around 100-300 cps). This was solved by reducing my system to only the bare essentials and gradually experimenting with what I could and couldn't run along side STinG."

Steve Stupple asks for help with his CDRom problem:

"I seem to have a problem reading CD-ROM's that have lowercase or mixed cased characters.. Is there a way to solve the problem or am I doing something wrong?? I'm using ExtenDOS Pro."

Lonny Pursell tells Steve:

"You might need to upgrade to ExtenDOS Gold. With the gold version I even get long file name support with MiNT which also displays mixed case. I don't know if the pro version is updated."

Kevin Dermott adds:

"this (ExtenDOS Pro)is what I use on Ataris both with Magic and single Tos,CD's that show up as Mixed case on my PC show up as all upper case on

Atari so I wouldn't say Extodos is at fault all though there were a few patches for it a while back but can't remember if they were for this problem."

Rene de Bie asks for help with his new Falcon:

"I am a new Falcon030 user and I have heard different thing about the serial port on my Falcon.

How can I get it above 19.200. I have seen once a program that could access the port to 115.200 or 56K.

Please let me know. My CPX doesn't allow me to do it, must I do a hardware upgrade ?"

Lonny Pursell tells Rene:

"

You just need a newer CPX and/or newer terminal software. Some communication programs handle the ports by themselves and the CPX is not needed. The Falcon can do 115k without hardware mods."

While we're on the subject of communications packages, Galen posts this little "tale of woe":

"Let me tell you all about my tale of woe:

I run a Falcon 030, 14Mb, stock. It took me all of 5 minutes to set up STing 1.15 a few months ago, but for some reason I never could get CAB 2.5 to work with Geneva, so I've been web browsing in single-tasking mode.

About a week ago, I noted a post on CSAST that recommended changing various configurations, like THREADING = 10 and so forth. I tried it, but did not get any noticeable change, positive or negative. It did seem to me, however, that CAB was "waiting for data" more than it used to.

Last night, my wife complained that CAB was not running. I tried it out and discovered that although the dialer seems to work fine, running any application (CAB, MyMAIL, Newsie) slows down the system to the point that it essentially locks up. Timeouts and "Transaction Failed" messages are the norm in CAB, MyMail discovers I have mail, takes 2 minutes to give a "Get Mail" button, and then appears to lock up. I can ping myself with great speed (25ms), but pinging yahoo.com results in 70% lost pings. I tried STing 1.2 and 1.22 last night with no success.

Essentially, I'm now locked off the internet at home and am quite sympathetic with Katherine's frustration with her CT2. Although I have no such accelerator, I have plenty of frustration. Any ideas, anyone?"

Kenneth Medin tells Galen:

"You really should visit <http://www.ettnet.se/~dlanor/> to get the latest versions.

I've been using STinG with Geneva+Neodesk for a long time with very few problems. Geneva seems to stay too long in supervisor mode somewhere

resulting in lost packets on MIDI ports. This happens both on TT, MSTe and ST. Also serial speeds above 57600 does not work. I use CAB 2.5 Aftp, Newswatch+Popwatch, BNET, Ftpserv, Weblight etc without problems on 4 Ataris and a pc in a serial network. The CAB overlay by Olivier Booklage does _not_ work btw. but the Ackerman does. Maybe that was your problem?

In the STinG Protocols cpx TCP page set:

Receive Window : 24000
Initial RTT: 1.500 sec

Note that Newsie sometimes can make mysterious changes to any files on your hard disk without telling you. This can happen if the logging is active. Perhaps there is something wrong with the Hsmodem programs?

I'd suggest you do a fresh install of all AUTO folder programs and STinG files on C:\ .

Set the receive buffer in SCC.PRG with the "Setter" to 4 KB and send buffer to 2 KB. Keep everything else like in the distribution.

I use this AUTO folder order with Geneva on my TT:

JARXX.PRG
NEOLOAD.PRG
MACCEL3.PRG
NVDI.PRG
DRIVIN.PRG
MFP.PRG (not needed on the Falcon)
SCC.PRG
MFP_TT.PRG (not needed on the Falcon)
MIDI.PRG
GENEVA.PRG (runs as late as possible to avoid lost packets)
STING.PRG

Note that some AUTO folder programs can disturb STinG. On my Mega 4 with 19" Moniterm monitor I had to change to another monitor driver to avoid lost packets. Also on the Falcon be careful with high screen resolutions."

Joe Villarreal adds:

"I am using the latest updates to Sting on my TT with Geneva/Neodesk. CAB 2.7, Newsie, Aftp, and Popwatch are working great in multi-tasking mode. I use MTU=576, MSS=536, Threading=10, and DEF_RTT=500. The latest updates to Sting have really increased the speed of internet access. MTU set at 1500 and MSS set at 1460 slowed down the speed on my provider."

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - AOL And EA Team Up!  'Mr. Nutz'!  
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                                GameXpo And Tourney News!  
                                "Slave Zero"!  'Duke Nukem'!  
                                Dreamcast 'Machine of the Year'!  
                                And much more!
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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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# Sega Dreamcast Named 'Machine of the Year' by TIME Magazine's TIME Digital

## Break-Through Videogame System Recognized as Leading Technology Product for 1999

Sega of America, Inc.'s 128-bit, Internet-ready Sega Dreamcast videogame console has been named 1999 "Machine of the Year" by TIME Digital, TIME Magazine's publication devoted entirely to personal technology.

Sega Dreamcast has been cited for its revolutionary design and technology advances, including 128-bit 3D graphics capabilities, home theater-quality sound, portable gaming options and Internet functionality, including web browsing, chat, e-mail and online gaming. The honor is part of TIME Digital's special holiday issue dated Nov. 29, 1999, on newsstands Monday.

Sega Dreamcast was chosen as a leading technology product for the year, beating out products such as MP3 players and personal video recorders.

The story, written by Chris Taylor, cites not only Sega Dreamcast's superior technology and game library, but the incredible consumer buzz and sales momentum, which has led consumers to purchase close to 1 million Sega Dreamcast consoles since it launched in the U.S. on Sept. 9, 1999.

"We at Sega are honored to have Sega Dreamcast hailed as the 'Machine of the Year' by the respected editorial staff at Time Digital," said Peter Moore, senior vice president, Sega of America. "Moving forward, Sega will continue to set new standards in gaming, especially via the online Dreamcast Network, which will further expand consumers' gameplay experience on Sega Dreamcast."

This announcement follows a stream of additional honors received by Sega Dreamcast in the last two weeks. Popular Science Magazine awarded Sega Dreamcast the "Best of What's New" Award. In CBS's annual Toy Test, Sega Dreamcast titles won seven of the 10 spots for best console software and The Wall Street Journal recently stated, "This Christmas, the Dreamcast is the only game in town."



## Electronic Arts And AOL in Online Games Deal

In a bid to become the world's top provider of video games online, Electronic Arts Inc. agreed to be the sole supplier of games to America Online Inc., the No. 1 Internet service provider.

Redwood City, Calif.-based Electronic Arts, the world's biggest developer of video games, also said it would form a separate online games division that will create a Web site in late summer 2000 allowing consumers to play games on online.

The company will also issue common shares in its new Internet business, in the form of a tracking stock, with an initial public offering planned for late next summer.

'EA is a leading creator of content and our intention is to make all that content available online," John Riccitiello, president and chief executive of Electronic Arts, said in an interview. Riccitiello will oversee the new Web business.

'This exclusive deal merges the two into what we see as a dream team," said Lise Buyer, a Credit Suisse First Boston analyst. 'We think (Electronic Arts) is very well positioned to be the No. 1 supplier of games online. All that was missing was a distribution network. AOL provides that."

While the five-year deal and things like the Web site will boost revenues in the coming years, they will first drag earnings down as the company makes investments in the online games business, its chief financial officer, Stan McKee, said.

Additionally, Electronic Arts also agreed to buy the Kesmai gaming unit of Rupert Murdoch's media conglomerate News Corp., for \$30 million in cash and stock in a deal that will result in a \$7.5 million charge against earnings, probably in the fourth quarter.

Nevertheless, Wall Street analysts responded favorably to the unveiling of the company's long-awaited Internet strategy, which fueled an 18 percent jump in Electronic Arts's stock.

Electronic Arts shares settled \$16.25 higher at \$108.25 after a session of active trading. AOL added \$4.12 at \$162.31.

AOL, based in Dulles, Va., said it will purchase 10 percent of the new common stock, and warrants for an additional five percent, while News America will acquire five percent of the new common shares. Both deals are subject to regulatory approval. The remaining shares will be retained by Electronic Arts and its employees.

Between the AOL and Kesmai deals, the new Web site and the other investments, Electronic Arts said it expects earnings dilution of 20 percent in the fiscal year ending in March 2001. First Call/Thomson Financial's latest consensus analysts' estimates predicts the company will earn \$2.52 in fiscal 2001. It earned \$1.74 in its last fiscal year ended in March 1999.

The company, which is known for its popular titles such as John Madden Football, SimCity, Conquer Tiberian Sun, and many others, plans an initial public offering to coincide with the introduction of the site, sometime by

the late summer of 2000.

''We are encouraged to see EA take off its gloves to fight in the dot com world, leveraging its best of breed, content and brands," said Larry Marcus, an analyst at Deutsche Banc Alex. Brown, who raised his price target to \$140, from \$110.

The deal with America Online spans five years starting in April 2000 and guarantees AOL \$81 million.

Electronic Arts will be exclusively responsible for the content on AOL's Games Channel and on its AOL.com Web site, its CompuServe service, ICQ and Netscape properties.

For its part, Electronic Arts plans to spend up to \$125 million between now and March 2001 as it builds its online games division. It said it will spend \$20 million to \$25 million in the current fiscal year ending March 2000, plus another \$100 million in the following year.

The money would be spent on fees and shared revenue associated with the AOL deal and on product and infrastructure development and marketing, said McKee, Electronic Arts' CFO.

''This year is a straight investment year," said Riccitiello, the president and CEO, adding that material profitability will come in fiscal 2003.

McKee, the CFO, estimated that revenue from the online division would be \$50 million to \$70 million next year and in fiscal 2002, revenue is expected to be \$175 million to \$200 million.

Electronic Arts will retain over 95 percent of subscription revenue and over 70 percent of advertising revenue, he said.

In the next year, Electronic Arts plans to offer 60 games online through AOL and its Web site through a subscription based service. It currently offers one online game, ''Ultima Online," for a \$9.95-a-month subscription fee.

Regarding plans for the tracking stock for the online gaming division, Electronic Arts said it expects to file a proxy statement with regulators by March 2000. It plans to do the IPO late in the summer of 2000, coinciding with the introduction of the Web site, McKee said.

The company said it is issuing a tracking stock so that investors could have an isolated return on its Internet business, and as additional currency for hiring new staff.

''While we are very good at hiring and recruiting, we need more of the best," Riccitiello said.

i2e2 and iGame Announce \$50,000 GameXpo and Tournament Series

CompUSA PC, Interact, 3Dfx, Aureal and Intel to Sponsor a New  
Level Of Competition for Organized Gaming

i2e2, the first standards organization for organized gaming, and iGame, a

leading producer of live gaming events and expos, Monday announced the inaugural "GameXpo and Tournament Series Presented by i2e2." The national tour will begin in the San Francisco Bay Area on November 27 and continue in major cities through late January 2000. Among the stops planned for the tour are San Jose, Las Vegas, Phoenix, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Cleveland and Dallas. Several national companies, including CompUSA PC, Interact, 3Dfx, Aureal and Intel, have signed on to serve as the tour's primary sponsors.

"This marks the beginning of a new era in organized competitive gaming," said Joe Perez, president of i2e2. "For the first time in the U.S., as part of our effort with iGame to take competitive gaming to a whole new level as an 'eSport,' gamers will be able to compete in a live event for both prizes and a national ranking."

Cash and prizes for the GameXpo and Tournament Series will total \$50,000, including over \$2,000 in cash for the top tournament players at each tour stop. Two of the hottest game titles -- Sega Sports NBA 2K for the Sega Dreamcast and GT Interactive Software's much-anticipated "Unreal Tournament" for the PC -- have been chosen as tournament games. Later this month, i2e2 and iGame plan to announce additional titles and sponsors as they expand the series. Players interested in competing in the tournament can get information at the i2e2 Web site, [www.i2e2.com](http://www.i2e2.com). Throughout the tournament, i2e2 will present complete details of the tour's progress, including streaming video of actual competitions on Sega Sports NBA 2K.

"We very excited to by working with i2e2," said Antonio Capretta, CEO of iGame. "They are bringing a cutting edge approach and new respectability to competitive gaming. Our combined success in putting this tournament together is reflected in the level of interest national sponsors have shown in the GameXpo and Tournament Series."

Several additional titles for the PC, Sega Dreamcast, Sony Playstation and Nintendo 64 will be highlighted as part of the GameXpo. These include PC games Nocturne and Fly! by Gathering of Developers, Tiberian Sun by Westwood Studios, Soldier of Fortune by Activision, Daikatana by Eidos and Prince of Persia 3D by Broderbund. For the Dreamcast, featured games will include NFL 2K by Sega Sports, Soul Fighter by Mindscape and Slave Zero by Accolade. For the Playstation, featured games will include Medal of Honor and Hot Wheels by Electronic Arts. Castlevania by Konami will be featured for Nintendo 64.

In sponsoring and launching the GameXpo and Tournament Series with iGame, i2e2 is establishing the first universal ranking system for competitive gaming. Similar to those found in professional tennis and stock car racing, the system incorporates rankings into all competitive events, including those sponsored by other gaming organizations. According to i2e2, gamers are now able to enter a variety of events and earn points toward a universal ranking based on their skill and the level of competition they participate in. i2e2's goal is to heighten the prestige of all sanctioned events, including established competitions and tournaments, by creating a higher level of competition where players can increase their overall standing in the gaming community. It also is designed to allow new players to work their way up to the professional level.

i2e2 and its plans were unveiled in September by Perez and Frank Cabanski, two of the leaders in the development of competitive gaming. Perez is the former online events manager of Total Entertainment Network (TEN), where he co-founded the Professional Gamers League (PGL), and Cabanski recently served as commissioner of the CyberAthlete Professional League (CPL).

The GameXpo and Tournament Series is part of the company's efforts to offer access to an array of gaming competitions, both live and online, that will include action games, strategy games, parlor games, arcade games, trivia games, game shows, simulations and sports-related game programs. These competitions are being designed for all skill levels, from high-level professional gamers to recreational players.

For complete details of the series, including tour locations, a listing of games being included on the tour, and the latest tour updates, visit [www.i2e2.com](http://www.i2e2.com). For information on iGame, go to the company's Web site at [www.igametours.com](http://www.igametours.com).

Tour Schedule (subject to change)

|             |                |
|-------------|----------------|
| San Jose    | November 27-28 |
| Las Vegas   | December 1-2   |
| Phoenix     | December 4-5   |
| Los Angeles | December 7-8   |
| Chicago     | January 15-16  |
| New York    | January 19-20  |
| Cleveland   | January 22-23  |
| Dallas      | January 26-27  |

Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. Acquires Exclusive  
Rights to Publish PlayStation 2 Computer Entertainment  
System Game Based On the Duke Nukem Franchise From 3D Realms

Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. announced Monday that it acquired the exclusive worldwide rights to publish a game based on the popular Duke Nukem franchise from 3D Realms Entertainment, a division of Apogee Software, Ltd., for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system.

Concurrently, Take-Two entered into a development agreement with n-Space, Inc., the developer of Duke Nukem: Time to Kill for the PlayStation computer entertainment system. Take-Two expects to release a title based on the enlarging set of characters from the Duke Nukem franchise for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system. Take-Two also has several other key titles in development for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system.

Since being introduced in 1991, Duke Nukem products have sold more than four million units, making the Duke Nukem series one of the most popular brands in the entire game industry.

Ryan Brant, Chief Executive Officer, said, "Take-Two and Rockstar welcome the opportunity to continue the tradition of Duke Nukem. We believe that the addition of titles based on the Duke Nukem franchise to our portfolio strongly positions Take-Two and RockStar as premier content publishers for next generation platforms."

Scott Miller, head of Apogee, said, "Rockstar, like us, wants to break the rules and make a Duke console game that's as successful and innovative as the Duke PC titles. This takes real talent and commitment, and between Rockstar, Take-Two and n-Space I have no doubts about it happening."

Duke Nukem, while rearranging the cigar between his teeth, also had a few

brief words: ``Rockstar rocks. Hail to the king, baby."

Electronic Arts Ships V-Rally 2 Presented  
by Need For Speed for the Playstation

Electronic Arts announces that it began shipping V-Rally 2 presented by Need For Speed for the PlayStation console system.

Built from the ground up, the release of this ``down and dirty" title helps to extend the popular, award-winning Need For Speed franchise with racing fans of all types and skill levels.

V-Rally 2 presented by Need For Speed offers gritty rally racing around the world, Need For Speed style, giving the player(s) an array of options to help customize the experience.

Set in real-time 3-D environments, V-Rally 2 features white-knuckled, arcade-style rally racing action through wildly different terrain on more than 80 tracks, a customizable track editor and random track generator, and a split screen mode that supports up to four-players.

Racing in V-Rally 2 happens in 12 diverse countries over roads of mud, snow, gravel, dirt and asphalt. Exotic locales and conditions include the treacherous icy roads of Sweden, the rough gravel roads of Indonesia, the breathtaking Corsican coastline and the famous cliffs of Monte Carlo.

Each of these courses can be raced under varying weather conditions, during the day or night. Players can choose from 16 officially licensed 1999 rally cars, and 10 officially licensed bonus cars from the illustrious history of rally racing. Each car features strikingly realistic graphics, physics and dynamic vehicle damage.

The result is that the cars' handling, performance and crashes now come with visual repercussions as doors get bashed in and windshields shatter. V-Rally 2 also features a computer graphics animated driver and co-pilot that react to the player's controls.

Helping to set V-Rally 2 presented by Need For Speed apart are its depth of gameplay and multiple options from which the player can choose. The game ships with four main gameplay modes including: Arcade, Rally Championship, V-Rally Trophy and Time Trial.

In addition, racing fans will enjoy unlimited track options, such as a powerful and intuitive track editor, allowing players to create courses bound only by their imagination. More than 40 tracks can be saved on a memory card for storage or to transfer to another PlayStation.

In addition, the game offers an Artificial Intelligence (AI) random track generator, designed for the player who enjoys the unexpected. These track options essentially make the number of courses available in the game limitless. Racing fans will also enjoy the depth of the statistics tracking which can keep tabs on multiple lap and stage times.

The game extends the standard PlayStation multi-player mode by offering support for up to four players on a single screen via the PlayStation multi-tap. Single and traditional two-player (via split screen) racing are also available. In addition, V-Rally 2 supports Dual Shock(TM) analog

controllers.

V-Rally 2 presented by Need For Speed was developed by Eden Studios and is being published by Electronic Arts in North America. The game carries an ESRB rating of ``E" (Everyone) and has a MSRP of US\$39.95.

Infogrames North America Brings Squirrely Fun  
to Game Boy Color With Mr. Nutz

Infogrames North America announced last week the shipment of Mr. Nutz for Game Boy Color.

Mr. Nutz, also known as Super Squirrel, is called to duty when the Yeti, a gruesome beast with an icicle for a heart, threatens to wrap the kingdom in snow and ice. The temperature may be dropping, but thanks to Mr. Nutz, the heat is on!

In classic side-scrolling style, younger gamers will enjoy adventuring through six action-packed, platform-jumping environments. Mr. Nutz arms himself with acorns picked up throughout the game to hurl at his enemies. If he runs out of ammunition he can also use his bushy tail to swat oncoming foes or jump on top of them if they get too close.

In addition to eliminating the Yeti's army of enemies in hopes of saving the kingdom from its frozen future, Mr. Nutz also collects ``magic" coins on his journey throughout the game to obtain special bonuses.

``Mr. Nutz is a game full of dynamic, colorful graphics, and was designed to appeal to younger gamers," said Rick Reynolds, director of product marketing for Infogrames North America's I-Heroes Label. ``This game is easy to learn and promises to provide players of all ages with hours of adventurous fun this holiday season."

Developed by Planet Interactive Development, Mr. Nutz is exclusive to the Game Boy Color. The game's estimated retail price is \$29.99 and can be found at most major retail outlets.

Infogrames North America Brings Hi-Tech Gadgetry and  
Espionage to the PlayStation With Mission: Impossible

Infogrames North America announced Monday the shipping of Mission: Impossible for PlayStation. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to rush to the nearest major retail outlet and pick up your copy of the game. This message will self-destruct in 5 seconds.

``Because of its innovative and adventurous gameplay in addition to the well known brand name, Mission: Impossible will reach beyond the normal realm of hardcore gamers," said Francois Lourdin, director of marketing for Infogrames North America's adventure label. ``The muscle we have behind the marketing of the game will also help make this title a must-have for PlayStation owners this holiday season."

In Mission: Impossible, you will be transported into a 3-D world full of espionage, sabotage and all-out adventure. Players assume the role of Ethan

Hunt, top Impossible Mission Force (IMF) agent, to work through five perilous missions and 20 tension-filled levels. The spy-thriller takes players on a whirlwind sequence of covert operations, each compounding in risk and danger, from the Russian Embassy in Prague to CIA headquarters in Langley, Va., to the climax at Waterloo Station in London.

Ethan will need to utilize wits and savvy to survive and successfully complete the daring missions. Cunning and smarts will prove more successful than hasty and reckless shooting in this series of top secret actions. Among the highly technical, innovative tools in Ethan's arsenal is the facemaker, which gives you the ability to change and assume the identities of enemies to help progress through the missions.

Features of this action-adventure title include a cinematic soundtrack, with the original "Mission: Impossible" theme, heightening the level of suspense with the use of movie-quality music and sound effects. In addition, the menu control and inventory interface is easy to understand with an all new quick save and quick load feature, allowing players to save at any point in a mission without the need of a memory card.

Developed by X-ample, Mission: Impossible for PlayStation can be found at most major retail outlets at the estimated retail price of \$39.99.

#### Infogrames North America Sends Slave Zero Stomping Onto Sega Dreamcast and the PC

What's that noise? Do you hear it? That's the sound of Infogrames North America's 60-foot tall biomechanical robot, Slave Zero slamming into stores this week.

Slave Zero is available for the PC and is also the first 4-player action game available this holiday season for Sega's new console, Dreamcast.

Slave Zero gives players control of a 60-foot biomechanical war machine 500 years in the future in a battle against rival forces throughout the vast metropolis, Sl-9. The city is ruled by the SovKahn, an evil dictator who possesses dark matter -- a mysterious energy source that is used to control the populace.

The player is part of a rebellion force who steals the ultimate weapon -- a giant biomechanical creature, and fuses with it to become Slave Zero. The ultimate objective is to destroy the SovKahn and restore peace.

"The sense of scale and Anime-style artistry is what makes Slave Zero shine and the agile movements of the robot are so lifelike that you can feel his anticipation through the controls," said Greg Sarraill, senior product marketing manager for Infogrames North America's I-Motion Label. "The pure adrenaline-pumping, mind blowing action of Slave Zero will be the intense thrill ride our gaming audience has been waiting for this holiday season."

Slave Zero is played from the third person perspective with an emphasis on scale and interactivity. Towering buildings line streets filled with cars, trucks and buses; hovercraft whiz overhead and people run down sidewalks screaming. The city environments range from giant "Slave" factories and mazes of sewers to downtown metropolitan streets and military bases.

Though 60-feet tall, Slave Zero is quite agile, possessing the ability to run, jump and even grab onto sides of buildings and hoist himself up. In addition to the wide variety of powerful weapons, Slave Zero can also pick up cars, tanker trucks, buses, girders and other pieces of the city environment and hurl them at enemy troops.

''Slave Zero has everything you could ask for in an action game. Lots of weapons, explosions, a nasty villain and a massive 60-foot hero who can lay on some serious destruction," said David Riley, marketing director for Infogrames North America's I-Motion Label. ''It's a great cornerstone for our action lineup."

The Dreamcast version of Slave Zero features a split-screen multi-player mode allowing for up to 4 players at a time to take part in the action.

Developed by Infogrames North America, Slave Zero can be found at most major retail outlets at an estimated retail price of \$49.99 for Dreamcast and \$39.99 for the PC version.

#### Infogrames North America, Inc. Gets Your Motor Running With Test Drive Cycles for Game Boy Color

Infogrames North America, Inc. announced Monday it is developing its motorcycle racing game, Test Drive Cycles, for the Nintendo Game Boy Color platform.

Gamers will be able to experience the thrill of riding a Harley-Davidson, Bimota, BMW or Moto Guzzi motorcycle through exotic tracks anywhere they can fire up their Game Boy Color. In addition to the Game Boy Color, Test Drive Cycles will be available for the PlayStation game console and the personal computer in spring of 2000.

''We're putting the key elements of Test Drive Cycles -- licensed bikes, exotic tracks and high-speed racing -- into the incredibly popular Game Boy Color," said Monte Singman, director of San Jose Studios at Infogrames North America, Inc. ''Our Game Boy Color version will let gamers hit the open road virtually anywhere."

The game features some of the hottest bikes available, from cruisers to musclebikes to sportbikes. Each class offers its own unique handling characteristics and riding style.

Some of the featured bikes are the Harley-Davidson FLSTF(TM) Fat Boy, the Bimota SB8R, the BMW R1100S and the Moto Guzzi V11 Sport Roadster. Bikes can be enhanced with Top Speed Acceleration, Speed Burst and Traction upgrades during tournament play.

In addition to a variety of different bikes, Test Drive Cycles features a range of tracks in exotic locations from around the world. Race from point A to point B in Hong Kong, Bali, Amsterdam, Washington D.C., Utah, South Dakota, Alaska, Switzerland, Germany, Death Valley, the French Riviera and Tokyo.

Players can choose from three game modes -- Single Race (includes two player mode), Tournament and Cop Chase:

-- Single Race: The player will start out with one bike available in



their garage and can race against nine other AI cycles on different tracks. For "mano y mano" action, two Game Boy players can race head-to-head using the Link Cable.

- Tournament: In the seven levels of tournament play, the player can win prize money for bike purchases and performance upgrades for their cycles. Trophies are awarded for tournament victories. When the player places first in all three races in a given level, the three new tracks at the next level are opened up.
- Cop Chase: Choose from either of the following authentic police bikes: Harley-Davidson FLHT(TM) Electra Glide or the BMW R1100 RT. The goal is to chase after speeding cyclists and write as many tickets as you can in one minute.

'Test Drive Cycles' is being developed by Xantera Inc. and published by Infogrames North America, Inc. The game will include Battery Backup which allows a player to save their five best times for each track as well as save tournament progress, cycles purchased, cycle upgrades, prize money won and trophies won.

#### Acclaim's 'Turok: Rage Wars' Explodes Into Stores

Acclaim Studios announced that the next installment in the Turok series, 'Turok: Rage Wars,' shipped to stores Tuesday. Developed by Acclaim Studios Austin and based on the Acclaim Comics' property, 'Turok: Rage Wars' is the first Nintendo 64 game specifically designed to maximize the intensity of the multiplayer experience.

'Turok: Rage Wars' is powered with an optimized version of the Turok engine, which delivers smoother, faster gameplay -- a key factor in multiplayer gaming," said Evan Stein, marketing director at Acclaim Entertainment. 'Acclaim's Austin Studios pulled out all the stops to bring Turok fans an original deathmatch game that builds upon the popular and successful Turok franchise.'

In 'Turok: Rage Wars,' Turok is unknowingly thrown into a tournament to battle a malevolent array of creatures vying for control of the Light Burden and the Lost Land. Gamers will have over 15 deathmatch levels to explore and new characters to control including: Adon, the Oblivion Deathguard, the Campaigner, and Lord of the Dead. 'Turok: Rage Wars' special features include a training mode, weapons with secondary fire functions, and a unique 'reward' system that enhances replay value. Additional weapon and power-up pickups within the game maps add to the strategy and high-energy battles.

While the emphasis of the game is on multiplayer, 'Turok: Rage Wars' also features single player and co-operative modes. The single player Trials serve as challenging training missions for players of all skill levels. As the player completes the Trials, additional characters, skins, and even weapons can be opened and saved for use in all gameplay modes. 'Turok: Rage Wars' also includes a new awards and statistics tracking system that allows players to develop their own personal saved character.

'We want players to build equity in their characters by collecting awards, achievements, and stats and comparing them against their friends,' says David Dienstbier, Creative Director at Acclaim Studios Austin. 'The more

you play, the more your character's history becomes obvious based on his awards. However, acquiring all the awards in the game is going to be a pretty challenging task."

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A-ONE's Headline News  
The Latest in Computer Technology News  
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Judge Orders Mediation in Microsoft Antitrust Case

The judge in the Microsoft case tried a fresh tack to resolve the landmark antitrust trial on Friday by appointing a highly respected appeals court jurist to mediate the case.

At the same time, U.S. District Court Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson set a schedule for oral arguments to help him decide whether the company violated antitrust law, assuring the case will go forward as scheduled if no settlement is reached.

Microsoft Corp., the Justice Department and the leaders of the 19 states involved in the case applauded Jackson's decision to appoint Judge Richard Posner, head of the U.S. Court of Appeals in Chicago, to mediate the case, "acting in a private capacity."

The order to appoint a mediator came two weeks to the day after Jackson found that Microsoft used monopoly power to harm consumers, competitors and other companies. The next step is to determine if the findings of fact constitute a violation of antitrust law by Redmond, Wash.-based Microsoft, the world's leading software maker.

Jackson underscored his decision that the case will stay on track by ordering that none of his deadlines should be "deemed postponed" by his order for mediation. He set Feb. 22 to hear oral arguments if no settlement is reached.

Both sides expressed enthusiasm for Jackson's decision and said they were open to trying to reach agreement.

"We think this is essentially a very positive step toward a possible resolution of the case," said Microsoft spokesman Mark Murray. "We're looking forward to working with Judge Posner to try to reach a fair and reasonable solution."

Justice Department spokeswoman Gina Talamona said the government looked forward to finding "ways to address the serious competitive problems identified in the court's findings of fact." She added that the Justice Department "has always been willing to seek a settlement that would promote competition, innovation and consumer choice."

Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller said the states "welcome the judge's order. We have always believed in the mediation process." Connecticut

Attorney General Richard Blumenthal said Posner ``brings to this task unsurpassed experience and expertise as a scholar and jurist."

Posner is one of the leading proponents of the conservative "Chicago School," which -- among other things -- altered the direction of antitrust law to rely less on government and more on the market.

His rulings are admired by lawyers of many political stripes as models of clarity and wit. American University Law Professor Jonathan Baker said Posner is ``one of the most respected and authoritative scholars in the field of antitrust."

``If Judge Posner tells Microsoft that an adverse decision by Judge Jackson is likely to be sustained on appeal, Microsoft has to take that decision seriously," said Baker, who teaches antitrust and at one time headed the Bureau of Economics for the Federal Trade Commission.

Legal scholars say it is dangerous to pigeonhole Posner.

For example, Posner called the break-up of AT&T in 1984 ``a landmark in the deregulation movement (that) set the stage for the enormous growth in telecommunications that is so salient a feature of today's economy."

Writing in the May 1999 edition of the Stanford Law Review, Posner added that he thought the AT&T decision was ``unwise" to limit local Bell operating companies from entering non-regulated businesses.

In his decision Friday, Jackson also invited Harvard Law Professor Lawrence Lessig to submit a ``friend of the court" brief, and said that the United States, the 19 states and Microsoft may designate one expert each to file briefs.

In earlier antitrust action involving Microsoft, Jackson designated Lessig as a special master to help hear the case. But Microsoft went to an appeals court and successfully challenged the use of special master.

#### Law Chiefs Say States, Justice United on Microsoft

Two state attorneys general said Tuesday the states and the Justice Department will be united when they face Microsoft Corp. in mediation before a Chicago judge on its landmark antitrust case.

``We will have a strategy to move into mediation and that will be coordinated with Justice, as it has been every other time we've been in negotiation," said Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller, who has been leading the states' efforts.

Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal said: "There will be a strong consensus among the states with the federal government about all aspects of the case."

U.S. District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson last week offered the parties a mediation led by Judge Richard Posner, who heads the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit in Chicago.

Jackson said the mediation would take place in Chicago before Posner, who would be acting privately and not in his official capacity.

From the governments' point of view, any deal would have to involve remedies to prevent Microsoft from continuing to commit the abuses alleged in the combined lawsuits heard by Jackson.

In a transcript of that closed meeting, released this week, Jackson expressed concern about a New York Times report that there was discord between the states themselves, and between the states and the Justice Department, over an approach to remedies.

Jackson said that there had been harmony between the states and federal government ``and I would like to see it continue. I would not like to have to deal with divergent points of view."

At the time, Miller assured Jackson there would be harmony in the future, ``throughout the rest of the case."

``I am delighted to hear it," replied the judge.

Connecticut's Blumenthal added: ``Those reports of divergent views were somewhat exaggerated."

In the past, the states and federal government had said they were studying the question of remedies and would be ready when the time came. As recently as last week, Miller said in an interview that he expected the states would eventually come to agreement on an approach.

Now the states and Justice Department suddenly have the responsibility to present their proposals in the coming days or weeks in mediation.

But while Miller said the two sides would have an agreed-upon strategy, he did not deal with the question of whether they would have agreed-upon remedies.

``I'm not saying what that strategy will be, whether there will be a broad plan we'll advocate," Miller said.

Blumenthal underscored the view that the states expect to work closely with each other and Justice, no matter what the challenge.

``There have been difficult issues and judgements from the outset, but we have maintained unity and consensus and I expect us to continue," he said in an interview.

Jackson himself is not yet at the point of considering remedies. But in strong findings of fact released earlier this month, Jackson said Microsoft abused monopoly power, hurting consumers, competitors and other companies.

Experts say Jackson is certain to find Microsoft violated antitrust law, which would probably bring him to the question of remedies around March.

#### Microsoft Class-Action Suit Filed in California

Lawyers for private clients filed a class-action suit in San Francisco on Monday, alleging Microsoft Corp. violated California State law by overcharging for its Windows operating system.

The suit filed in San Francisco Superior Court alleged the plaintiffs "paid more for Windows than they would have paid in the absence of the illegal trust" by Microsoft, and they will try to collect damages to be determined at trial.

The suit is based in part on findings of fact by a federal judge in Washington, who found Microsoft -- the world's leading software maker -- used monopoly power to harm consumers, competitors and other companies. However, District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson has issued no conclusions of law in the case.

One of the lawyers who brought the suit in California, Dan Mogin of San Diego, said, "Another judge would be free to look at the findings of fact and draw his own conclusions of law."

In one finding, Jackson said Redmond, Wash.-based Microsoft charged \$89 for Windows when there was "no reason to believe" that a \$49 price "would have been unprofitable." That \$40 difference is of interest to the plaintiffs in the class-action suit.

Other lawyers involved in the case were Francis Scarpulla and Terry Gross of San Francisco and Timothy Cohelan of San Diego.

#### Private Lawsuits Plague Microsoft

A growing wave of private lawsuits against Microsoft Corp. suddenly has the company fighting on several legal fronts at once, raising the stakes in its antitrust battle in Washington and intensifying pressure on Microsoft to settle with the Justice Department.

At least seven suits, including one filed Monday in a state court in San Francisco, have been filed on behalf of computer users in response to a judge's Nov. 5 finding that Microsoft is a software monopolist that routinely bullies high-tech rivals. The finding provided grist for allegations by computer users that Microsoft's monopoly gave it substantial leeway to overcharge for its Windows software program.

Microsoft is viewed as rich enough and legally savvy enough to weather a continued onslaught of private actions, which may be consolidated anyway into a federal suit. Among the world's most profitable companies, Microsoft is sitting on a cash hoard of about \$19 billion and has no debt.

But legal experts say the state and federal lawsuits, filed so far in Alabama, California, Louisiana and New York, could create a short-term coordination challenge at Microsoft as it tries to ensure its legal arguments and trial maneuvers are consistent across different jurisdictions.

Moreover, the suits are likely to reinforce pressure on the software giant to reach an out-of-court settlement with the Justice Department, particularly after the judge in the trial appointed a mediator last Friday to oversee voluntary negotiations. A settlement would make it far more difficult for private plaintiffs to use the judge's findings to build a foundation for a case against Microsoft.

"As more of these lawsuits are filed, you have to assume that Microsoft

will look for some way to try to prevent the trial from going to conclusion," said Richard Thomas Delamarter, an expert on corporate monopolies who teaches antitrust history and technology at Yale University.

``These private cases only add to the pressure."

Indeed, the appointment of a mediator and a prospect for a Microsoft settlement offset any concern by investors on Monday that Microsoft may get swamped by lawsuits. The company's stock was sharply higher, rising more than 4 percent, or by \$3.811/4 at \$89.811/4, as of the 4 p.m. EST close of trading on the Nasdaq Stock Market.

So far, consumers have filed three cases in San Francisco; one in Orange County, Calif.; and one each in New York; New Orleans and Birmingham, Ala. They all seek class-action status, potentially on behalf of millions of consumers.

The suits in Alabama and Louisiana are federal cases, while the ones in New York and California are in state courts. New York and California are among more than a dozen states that make it easier for consumers to sue for allegedly overcharging for products.

Microsoft said through a spokesman that it has plenty of legal resources to fight the suits. ``It's unfortunate that plaintiffs' attorneys have decided to file baseless lawsuits," said Jim Cullinan, the spokesman. ``We believe our actions have been pro-competitive and fully legal."

Regardless of the eventual outcome of the antitrust case, the broadened legal assault could compel Microsoft to tone down its aggressive behavior in the computer industry.

Consider the long-running antitrust case against International Business Machines Corp., another famous computer industry monopoly. IBM had to defend itself not only against a Justice Department suit, but also against competitors and private individuals whom the government's action prompted to file similar complaints

Although the government eventually dropped its case in 1982, and although most of the private lawsuits were decided in IBM's favor, the combined weight of the litigation compelled IBM to play it safe in the computer business, allowing rivals to move in on the company's long-held markets and leading to a protracted decline at the world's largest computer company.

``You'll end up with a better behaved Microsoft," said Delamarter, also the author of ``Big Blue: IBM's Use and Abuse of Power." ``It's the analogy - you drive more carefully when you have a police car behind you."

The reverberations in the Microsoft case, though, may take some time to reach Wall Street. Even though the private lawsuits may seek billions of dollars in damages to compensate for Microsoft's alleged overcharges, investors for the time being remain focused on the company's robust profits.

``The stock is in the midst of a bull market," said Brian Belski, chief investment strategist at George K. Baum & Co., in Kansas City, Mo. ``It's just too much of a risk not to own the stock."

## Nasty Melissa Variant Set To Go Off On Christmas

It's called the W97M/Prilissa virus. But a better name for it would be the Grinch virus.

Anti-virus researchers at Network Associates Inc. said Friday that 10 Fortune 500 companies on three continents have been hit with a new virus called W97/Prilissa. Prilissa is a nasty variant on two better known attacks -- the Melissa worm and the PRI virus. The virus depends on the Windows 95 and 98 operating systems and the Word 97 word processing application.

If opened, it will e-mail itself to the first 50 names on a computer's Outlook or Outlook Express e-mail client.

"This is probably the fastest infection rate we've seen since Melissa," said Sal Viveros, antivirus product manager at Network Associates, in Santa Clara, Calif. The virus uses macro commands similar to those of Melissa to replicate itself.

But the virus itself won't go off until Christmas day. That means it won't have much of an impact on companies, which aren't likely to be open on that day, even if it should go undetected. But there is a big threat to home PC users, particularly unsuspecting children logging onto the computer to play with their new games on Christmas.

The Dr. Suess analogies are endless.

The virus itself looks for a registry key to verify if the local system has been infected. If it hasn't, the virus creates a Microsoft Outlook e-mail message with the subject line "Message From (Office 97 user name)" and a message body that says "This document is very Important and you've GOT to read this!!!"

The first 50 listings from all address books are selected, along with an attachment - the infected document, whatever it is.

If the date is December 25, the virus runs a destructive payload to overwrite the existing C:/AUTOEXEC.BAT file with the instructions:

```
"@echo off"
```

```
"@echo Vine...Vide...Vice...Moslem Power Never End..."
```

```
"@echo Your Computer Have Just Been Terminated By == CyberNET== Virus  
!!!"
```

```
"ctty nul"
```

```
"Formate c:/autotest/q /u"
```

The virus will not run on Windows NT. Another message is displayed on Word 97, adding:

```
"You Dare Rise Against Me... The Human Era is Over, The CyberNET Era Has  
Come!!!"
```

Most antivirus vendors are expected to have a definition update and fix prepared within the next few hours.

It's unclear who will carve the roast beast.

#### AOL Users Must Reiterate No-spam Preferences

America Online's direct-marketing schemes are in the spotlight again as the company forces its members to jump through hoops to avoid receiving unsolicited junk email, or spam.

A number of AOL users on Friday received a mass emailing from the online giant informing them that their "marketing preferences" are due to expire next month--just 18 months after the company unveiled new privacy and security policies ostensibly aimed at bolstering consumer protections.

Members were told they would have to respond to block direct-marketing offers after Dec. 8 even if they had already refused to accept such offers in the past. The Marketing Preferences section in AOL's proprietary service gives users the option of blocking any direct-marketing pitches--including pop-up ads, direct mail, email and telemarketing--from AOL's partners.

Although AOL's marketing preferences policies have existed for some time, they also have been the target of criticism from privacy advocates. Critics take issue with AOL's adherence to "opt out" marketing, which means members grant permission to direct marketers to send them email by default until they personally go to the preferences area and turn it off.

Such marketing tactics are a touchy subject in general. But some privacy advocates point out that, even by Web standards, AOL is pushing the envelope when it says that opting out once does not mean opting out forever.

"They've taken a giant leap backward by expiring people's clearly stated requirements," said Jason Catlett, a consumer advocate who operates a site called JunkBusters. "Most [Internet] companies do take no for an answer."

According to AOL, the company instituted the one-year expiration date policy when it revised its Terms of Service agreement a year and a half ago.

"This has been going on since the Terms of Service was...updated to be more comprehensive," said AOL spokeswoman Tricia Primrose.

But analysts, privacy advocates and some AOL users said they were not aware of the one-year expiration period.

"I think a lot of people are surprised," said Patrick Keane, an analyst at Jupiter Communications. "It's not a smart way to do business with consumers when you're going to quickly upset them."

Web sites hungry for new revenue streams haven't been shy about soliciting permission to collect personal information about users, which they can then sell to advertisers.

Users can agree to submit more information about their shopping



preferences or allow a Web site to profile their online surfing habits. Web sites can then sell detailed user information to allow advertisers to target users that fit their demographic.

Web sites insist the arrangement benefits consumers by providing tailored advertising pitches on products and offers that people would like to know about. But most sites have been reluctant to require users to actively request direct-marketing pitches through so-called opt-in systems, presumably because fewer users would do so.

David Sobel, general counsel at the Electronic Privacy Information Center, wonders whether the practice is just another example of AOL's aggressive marketing techniques.

"The question is, why is the default always to get the solicitations?" he said. "The average person is not going to go through the trouble, especially now if it becomes a yearly chore."

#### Comdex Witnesses Dawn of New IT Age

The PC has become so passe that even PC makers are reluctant to talk about it anymore.

The notion of Internet appliances as adjuncts to or replacements for the PC dominated the industry's biggest trade show here this week. Comdex marked a symbolic end to much of what IT buyers have come to expect from the beige-box PC, not only in technology and style, but also in terms of services, content and support.

Every major PC company is developing systems for consumers and corporate customers alike that look and function more like VCRs than PCs, with televisionlike simplicity the ultimate, albeit long-term, goal.

Beyond the box, PC companies such as Compaq Computer Corp. are building portals for customized content. Dell Computer Corp., which once eschewed handheld devices, is expanding its hardware lineup to include a two-way wireless device, which it will license from Research In Motion Ltd.

In addition, services, not systems, are becoming a primary driver of PC sales. Dell, of Round Rock, Texas, is refining the support.dell.com site for personalized Web support, an initiative that was announced in August. Gateway Inc. in January will launch eSource, a program for providing corporate customers with customized, private Web sites. Also in January, the San Diego company will expand its consulting practice for corporate accounts.

Four out of the top five PC makers have established venture capital funds to invest in infrastructure and content companies in an effort to offer customers an outside-the-box experience.

Surprisingly, the world's No. 1 PC maker, Compaq, has become the most bullish on information appliances. It's predicting that by 2005, multifunction cell phones, pagers, desktop terminals and handheld computers will make up 90 percent of its client sales. The other 10 percent, it says, will be desktops, portables and workstations.

"The Web is replacing the PC as the engine for IT market growth," said

Jeffrey Harrow, senior consulting engineer at Compaq, in Houston.

In fact, Compaq is in discussions with consumer giants Sony Corp. and Nokia Corp. to help develop these devices, which Compaq will eventually sell under its own brand, said Jerry Meerkatz, a vice president at Compaq.

To handle the radical change in the way people are expected to buy and use PCs, Hewlett-Packard Co. is developing PC-centric services "tailored specifically to customer segments."

HP is refining the model and hopes to deliver on it next year, said Webb McKinney, vice president and general manager of HP's business PC organization, in Palo Alto, Calif.

One clear option is application hosting.

"There's a strong interest in application hosting, whether it's from us or from someone else," McKinney said. "Small businesses are looking for virtual IT."

HP is working with Qwest Communications International Inc. for hosting, and Dell is working with eOnline Inc. for SAP AG R/3 hosting. This week, Compaq announced a deal with Cable & Wireless Plc for application hosting services.

If delivered properly, the evolving custom content and delivery infrastructure could hit a sweet spot with IT managers.

"If I can deliver specialized content internally and externally, especially to customers, then that's an important strategic part of our business," said J.B. Dunn, desktop technology manager at Roadway Express Inc., in Akron, Ohio. "It's largely true that hardware is inconsequential. I'm not aware of any revolutionary hardware technologies."

While acknowledging that the role of PCs is narrowing and being redefined, two companies with a vested interest in today's platform -- Intel Corp. and Microsoft Corp. -- say the PC remains the cornerstone of the digital age.

"PCs are alive and well," said Pat Gelsinger, vice president and general manager of the Desktop Products Group at Intel, in Santa Clara, Calif. "We're doing 120 million units a year. We support the other [platforms], but let's not forget [the PC]."

"PCs are important. Other devices are important. And they all certainly fit in the context of what we think is important," said Steve Ballmer, president of Microsoft, in Redmond, Wash.

Rivals trying to turn the Wintel platform on its ear have a different view.

"Our opportunity is in the killer applications of the 21st century, not reinventing the PC platform," said Bob Young, chairman of Red Hat Software Inc., in Cary, N.C. "The killer apps will be Internet appliances."

The upside of the post-PC era -- or the "PC plus" era, as Microsoft refers to it -- is less reliance on traditional technologies and

companies for productivity in the office, on the road and in the home.

It's a transition and an opportunity that technology and service providers, suppliers and especially customers have not witnessed since the birth of the PC 20 years ago.

Said Compaq's Meerkatz: "The whole world is open again."

#### Here Come Even Cheaper PCs

Just when it looked as if computers could not get cheaper, Intel Corp. hopes to usher in an age of minimal-cost PCs -- perhaps \$400 -- next year.

And the systems would not only benefit consumers. Intel says the new personal computers will help PC manufacturers, whose margins have been squeezed by the sub-\$1,000 PC phenomena, to make money at the low end of the price range.

With average retail PC selling prices heading below \$850 in September, chip maker Intel (Nasdaq:INTC - news) is targeting an emerging sub-segment of the under-\$1,000, or "value market," with extremely low-cost models that will walk the PC/appliance line.

These minimal-cost PCs, likely costing \$600 or less and perhaps as low as \$399, will be driven by a forthcoming inexpensive integrated Intel processor, code-named Timna. Intel says such PCs should benefit customers by allowing PC makers to create a range of new cheap PCs, full-function PCs or appliance devices that cost even less, based on the relatively inexpensive Timna.

With the exception of eMachines Inc., most PC makers don't offer Windows-based models costing much below \$599. While some have offered PCs under \$500, they have generally been with outdated, end-of-life technologies such as slower processors and CD-ROM drives.

The reason is clear: There is little if any profit at the low-end of the PC market, analysts agree.

With Timna, Intel is attempting to make it easier for vendors to hit lower price points. For PC buyers, this means brand new technologies with decent performance for lower prices.

"What you'll see next year is the sub-segmenting of the value space," said Pat Gelsinger, an Intel vice president and general manager of its Desktop Products Group. "Everybody has priced (PCs) to compete in the (value) space, but nobody's making money."

To that end, the company will offer Timna, which is based on Intel's new 0.18 micron manufacturing process, in the second half of next year with the goal of lowering overall platform costs.

Timna will combine a Pentium processor core developed specifically for this low-cost market with a graphics engine and memory controller. By combining these three functions into a single chip, Intel says it will lower PC makers' overall component costs and reduces the size of the motherboard needed for Timna-based a system, another cost-saving measure.

Cost savings allow PC makers to charge less for a given system. But for end-users, the chip promises even lower entry-level pricing. Such PCs can be viewed as the equivalent of entry-level automobiles, which are relatively inexpensive, but meet all of the basic needs of the customer. Their low cost may also encourage those buyers who have not yet purchased PCs to jump on the bandwagon.

Analysts agree there is an emerging sub-segment of ultra low cost PCs in the sub-\$1,000 PC market. Just follow the market trends, they say. September market research numbers show that average retail desktop PC sold for about \$828. The price decline seen in September was 23 percent.

While PCs priced between \$600 and \$1,000 accounted for a majority of sales in September, 43 percent, nearly 34 percent of PCs sold in the retail market were priced below \$600, according to market research firm, NPD Intellect LCC

"I think we're going to consistently see prices decline. I think ASPs (average selling prices) are going to drop into the \$600 to \$700 range next year," said Matt Sargent, principle of Sargent Consulting a San Diego-based market research firm. "I think we're going to see a lot of systems, that are limited systems, in the \$400 to \$500 price range. The question is what is a PC and what isn't?"

Intel says that those definitions don't matter. The Timna chip will support PCs that run Windows as well as appliance devices that run Linux.

"It's an Intel Architecture product and it runs Windows, so it's a PC," Gelsinger said. If a PC maker or device maker were to use Timna in a device with limited function and an operating system like Linux, "Now you call it an appliance," he said.

Sargent agreed, but it's not a given that PC makers will adopt Timna because it has Intel inside.

"I think that makes sense. I think Intel learned in the retail market in 1997 and 1998 that it can't ignore the low-end and just play in the high-end," Sargent said. However, "You're seeing the move already with VIA (Technologies Inc.) They'll come out with a continued focus (on low-end)."

VIA, which purchased National Semiconductor Inc.'s Cyrix processor business and IDT's WinChip business late in the summer, has made public plans to continue to produce Cyrix MII chips, at least through its 433MHz equivalent. It will follow with two new processors for Socket 370, a 370 pin socket for low-cost PCs developed by Intel for its Celeron chip. The two chips include an MII-based follow-on running at 433MHz to 566MHz equivalents and a later chip, based on Centaur Winchip technology at speeds of 500Mhz and greater in late 2000, according to published reports.

It is likely that low-cost PC makers will at least evaluate the new chips, possibly pitting them against Timna.

Don't count out AMD, either. The company has made veiled references to an internal effort to develop its own integrated platforms, and has said publicly it will offer low-cost versions of its Athlon chip, which utilize a lower-cost socket, called Socket A.

AMD, in addition, will debut in the first half of next year new versions of its K6-2 and K6-III chips, called K6-2+ and K6-III+, based on its 0.18 micron manufacturing process. The K6-2+ chip will offer 128KB of integrated cache, which should help boost performance over the current iteration of the chip.

Although Timna will address the low end of the market for Intel, the company has no plans to abandon the Celeron chip, which serves the \$600 to \$1,200 PC market. Intel will continue to improve Celeron by moving it to its 0.18 micron manufacturing process, which will bring with it faster clock speeds, in the first half of 2000. Users should expect to see this version of the chip debut at speeds of about 550MHz. It should scale to 600MHz and faster in the second half of the year.

Just how low will PC prices go when the next wave of low-cost chips hit?

"It's hard to see (PC prices) going much below \$399, given the current pricing structure," said Stephen Baker, director of analysis at market research firm PC Data Inc. in Reston, Va. However, "There may be some opportunity between all those things (Timna, combined with the removal of legacy components, such as PS/2 ports or ISA buses from PC) for some decent savings."

#### Olympus, IBM Make Wearable Computer

The screen is a monocle that fits over one eye. The computer, a pocketbook-sized box with two buttons.

Sound futuristic? Japanese camera maker Olympus and the Japanese unit of IBM came out with a prototype ``Wearable PC'' on Friday and said the gadget could hit stores soon.

The companies jointly developed the machine for those who can't be bothered to carry laptops around and want to wear their computers instead.

The 13-ounce computer has an Intel Pentium processor, 64 megabytes of memory and runs the Microsoft Windows operating system.

The tiny screen flips out from a headset and covers one eye, projecting the image of a much larger monitor. A banana-shaped handle with a touchpad and two buttons is used to select icons in the ``Eye Trek" virtual screen.

The Wearable PC doesn't have a keyboard yet, but ``we may develop that in the future," said Olympus spokesman Shinichiro Murakami. In the meantime, users can open and look at files and play audio and video.

Murakami said the companies will decide next year when to launch the computer.

#### A Net Record: 1 Billion Page Views Per Day

The Internet reached an important milestone during the month of October

when an average of 1 billion hits per day were recorded in the United States.

The latest report from online measurement service Media Metrix Inc., which tracks cyber traffic at home and at work, recorded 32.2 billion page views in October. That traffic report, which was a record, was up 49 percent from the same period last year.

Overall, the number of people getting on to the Net remains steady. Media Metrix records 63.9 million unique users for October. That represents a 12.5 percent increase year over year. However, the number of people accessing the Internet from both at home and at work is on the rise with a 40 percent increase over a year ago.

America Online, Yahoo, Microsoft, Lycos, and the Go Network continue their reign as the top five properties on the Web. When looking at individual sites, Netscape.com comes in at number five and Lycos and Go.com drop to numbers 10 and 7, respectively.

Media Metrix's list of top 50 Web sites features a few new URL's since September. Search engine Directhit.com and direct marketing site Smartbotpro.net made their debuts on the list. After ranking as the number eight Internet directory in September, the At Hand Network saw its traffic increase by 2.4 million and it now ranks as the 47th most visited property overall.

#### Web Complaints Increase

Auto sales, auto repair and home improvement services still generate the most complaints from consumers, but gripes about Internet-related service, purchases and auctions are rising steadily, a survey released Tuesday indicates.

The eighth annual survey by the National Association of Consumer Agency Administrators and the Consumer Federation of America also shows a huge increase - 1,037% last year - in complaints about "cramming," the practice of padding telephone or credit card bills with unauthorized charges, typically from third parties.

Fraud costs consumers tens of billions of dollars a year, said Jean Ann Fox, director of consumer protection for Consumer Federation.

#### Second U.S. Team Takes Step Toward Tiny Computer

Scientists said on Friday they had created a molecule-sized device that may one day make cheap, superfast computers available, without relying on electricity.

The team, at Rice University in Houston and Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, is the second group to report that they have made "logic gates" -- a kind of on-off switch for basic computer processes -- out of a single molecule.

Logic gates are switches used to represent ones and zeros, the binary

language of digital computing.

Building one means a molecular computer -- which researchers think would require far less power than current computers and may be able to hold vast amounts of data permanently -- is one step closer, said chemistry professor James Tour of Rice, who worked on the study.

''Fifty percent of the job is done," he said in a statement. ''The other 50 percent is memory."

Writing in Friday's issue of the journal Science, the Yale/Rice team said their two-way switch, if it can be hooked up to a network of equally tiny and efficient materials, will be much faster than the current silicon-based computers.

''It's about a million times smaller in area than a silicon device," Tour said in a telephone interview.

''For some applications they'll beat the pants off silicon," he added.

''We are not suggesting that we are going to replace silicon ... It really looks like we're going to have hybrid molecular- and silicon-based computers within five to 10 years."

Engineering professor Mark Reed of Yale University noted that a lot of work has yet to be done.

''Although there are a host of engineering challenges to bring this to a manufacturable technology, this study demonstrates the principle and the fundamental limits of what can be done."

In July, a team at the University of California Los Angeles and at Hewlett-Packard reported in the same journal that they had made a logic gate out of a single molecule.

''The biggest difference is that ours was reversible -- theirs was irreversible," Tour said.

He said his team's molecular logic gate was far superior to a silicon-based one. ''The amount that it turns on is extra -- it is a 1,000 percent increase from off to on."

He said that is not necessarily a problem with silicon base devices, but it illustrates that molecules will be even better, and will be easy for engineers to work with. ''It's a superior performance. People never expected it out of such a small molecule," he said.

And the low price can help transform the industry. Tour pointed out that making silicon chips is a fussy process. "Right now it costs about \$2 billion to build a clean room," he said. ''You have to find a way to make devices, lots of them, more cheaply."

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